



Iowa Kids Count

Special Report *Update*

March
2010

Is Iowa Educationally Competitive? Children and Iowa's Economic Future

March 2010 Update on NAEP Reading Scores

In January, 2010, Iowa Kids Count produced a special report that showed long-term trends in Iowa student reading and mathematics scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only source for comparative state information on student achievement. The January report showed a decline in Iowa's ranking since 1992, when the first NAEP scores were reported, with Iowa ranking in the bottom third of states among its White student population.

On March 24th, 2010, the National Center for Education Statistics released the 2009 NAEP reading scores for both 4th and 8th grade.

Fourth Grade Reading Scores. NAEP fourth grade reading scores are shown in Table One. The NAEP scores on fourth grade reading show Iowa's continuous decline relative to other states (except for an upturn in 2007). Over the 17-year period, Iowa's

composite score declined by four points, while the composite score improved by five points nationally. Iowa moved from 5th to 26th among states on fourth grade reading.

When broken down by race, however, Iowa shows up much less well. Iowa is more homogenous than the country as a whole, so it is important to examine the NAEP figures by race and ethnicity. Among White students, Iowa's ranking among states dropped from 9th in 1992 to 45th in 2009. For the last three testing periods, Iowa's White students have composite scores that rank Iowa in the bottom third of states. Not all states have sufficient populations of African American, Hispanic, or Asian and Pacific Islander students, but comparing Iowa with states that do shows that Iowa at best ranks in the middle for these groups (26th out of 45 states for African Americans, 21st out of 46 states for Hispanics, and 22nd out of 33 states for Asian and Pacific Islanders).

Table One: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Scores

4th Grade Reading						
	All Students			White Students		
	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>
1992	225	215	5th	226	223	9th
1994	223	212	6th	224	222	11th
1998	220	213	9th	222	223	19th
2002	223	217	11th	225	227	23rd
2003	223	216	10th	226	227	25th
2005	221	217	24th	224	228	40th
2007	225	220	15th	227	230	34th
2009	221	220	26th	224	229	45th
Change	-4	+5		-2	+6	
Other Races/Ethnicity 2009						
	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>	<u># States</u>		
African American	203	204	26th	45		
Hispanic	207	204	21st	46		
Asian & Pacific Islander	229	234	22nd	33		

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Eighth Grade Reading Scores. An update of the NAEP eighth grade reading scores is shown in Table Two. Eighth grade reading scores only are available for the years from 2003 to 2009 for Iowa, but they are consistent with the fourth grading reading scores in terms of Iowa's rankings and trend lines. There were not sufficient Asian and Pacific Islanders in Iowa's 2009 eighth grade reading scores to provide a composite number, but African American and Hispanic scores showed Iowa among the lagging states for these populations, when compared with other states that could be measured.

student achievement. Others have set new incentives and accountability standards to promote excellence in teaching. Some have done more to consolidate small school districts. Some have increased per-pupil investments and investments in teacher salaries more. These all may contribute to improved student achievement.

While Iowa's K-12 education system is not solely responsible for the relative decline in student achievement, most of the solution must come from within the education system. This is not the purview

Table Two: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Scores

8th Grade Reading						
All Students			White Students			
	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>
1992	-----	260	-----	-----	267	-----
1994	-----	260	-----	-----	267	-----
1998	-----	263	-----	-----	270	-----
2002	-----	263	-----	-----	271	-----
2003	268	261	12th	269	270	24th
2005	267	260	13th	269	269	25th
2007	267	261	12th	270	270	28th
2009	265	262	27th	267	271	39th
Change (from 03)	-3	+1		-2	+1	
African American			Hispanic			
	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Iowa Rank</u>
2009	241	245	34th (41 states)	249	248	26th (42 states)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Conclusion. As stated in the January Kids Count report, the figures run counter to what most Iowans believe about the state's education system. While Iowans place a high value on literacy and education and are concerned about its direction, there has not yet been an understanding that Iowa's education system no longer leads the nation, and that the state needs leadership to regain its educational footing. The trends have no single cause or explanation. Parents are their children's first and most important teachers, and Iowa has a lower percentage of parents with college degrees than many other states, although it has a greater percentage with high school diplomas. While Iowans value basic education, parents may not be pressing as strongly for increasingly high standards and levels of educational advancement and achievement. It is not so much that Iowa student achievement has declined as it is that it has not advanced as it has in most other states.

Some states have taken more steps than Iowa to institute statewide standards and expectations for

of a single Gubernatorial initiative, but needs to be part of Iowa's overall political culture. It starts with recognizing where Iowa is, and articulating the unacceptability of maintaining educational mediocrity. Changes will not occur without both recognition of the seriousness of the situation and the commitment to go beyond "business as usual" to address it.

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